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EAST TIMOR

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, to corroborate the remarks of our colleague from Winnipeg—Transcona I would like to tell the House that today marks the anniversary of the illegal invasion of East Timor by Indonesian troops.

East Timor at that time had just become an independent colony of Portugal. An island inhabited by an indigenous population of 700,000 with a rich cultural tradition, it is also rich for its natural resources.

The resultant annexation of East Timor by Indonesia only came after the slaughter of 200,000 of its indigenous population and the imposition of policies which continue to destroy East Timor's cultural traditions.

The Canadian government is out of step with other western countries and the United Nations in not participating in actions against Indonesia. The reason appears to be the very high level of economic investment and trade that Canada has been developing with Indonesia. We would address East Timor human rights abuses at the peril of losing important trade and economic benefits.

Canada must develop coherent policies which link international human rights to aid trade and refugee determinations. The parliamentary subcommittee on international human rights must be given every support necessary to achieve this important objective in order that legitimate concerns for international human rights abuses may be addressed.